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The Washington Merry-Go-Round

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Moscow's Army Has Achilles Heel

By Drew Pearson

This column has already reported on the emergency White House meetings the night before elections when high Administration officials feared Russia was going to precipitate World War III. On that night, Nov. 25, Herbert Hoover, then acting Secretary of State, was so worried that Dwight D. Eisenhower, running as the peace President, might become a war President that all U. S. atomic vessels were ordered to sea, the Strategic Air Command was alerted, and various other military precautions were taken.



Allen Dulles, head of Central Intelligence, had just flown into New York from Europe and was about to sit down for a drink at the Piping Rock Club on Long Island with his old partner, Arthur Dean, when summoned to Washington. He calmed White House nerves, argued that a Soviet attack was highly unlikely.

On that night the President sent emphatic notes to Prime Ministers Eden and Mollet demanding a cease-fire in Egypt. Since then the Administration, still jittery over possible Russian "volunteer" attacks on Suez, has pressured and badgered the British and French to get out.

Likewise U. N. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge at first leaned toward Russian appeasement in the U. N. debates on Hungary, while Voice of America employees were instructed they could not donate personally to Hungarian freedom fighters.

Achilles Heel

It is now possible to take a good look at Soviet threats and see whether Administration panic has been justified.

It should be remembered that the Kremlin organized part of the Red Army from the Hungarians, Poles, Czechs, Romanians and Bulgarians. Other members of the Red Army are not only from Russia proper, but also from Armenia, the Ukraine, the Caucasus, White Russia, Turkestan, and areas not always sympathetic with having their nationalism merged under the Soviet Union.

The Hungarian freedom fight brought all this latent nationalism to the surface, has made the Red Army one of the least reliable forces politically in the world. Here is what happened:

The Hungarian Red Army went over to the freedom forces almost en masse. The officers had been Communist Party members only on paper. In the showdown they chose to line up with the Hungarian people.

As a result, four divisions of the Red Army in near-by Rumania were rushed into Hungary. The minute they left Rumania, riots started there. The troops had to be rushed back.

Meanwhile, Russian troops inside Hungary have been apologizing to the Hungarians for having had to carry out Russians have deserted. In the

mountain chain north of Hungary and in the Bakony Forest in West Hungary, Russian officers and men have joined Hungarian guerrillas.

At the former Nazi concentration camp of Gerany near Satoraljauihely on the Czechoslovak border, Soviet troops, demobilized because of their unreliability, are awaiting transportation to Siberian slave-labor camps. Other camps have been hastily fenced in with barbed wire, and renegade Russian soldiers are now guarded by MVD secret police and bloodhounds.

Some of the Red Army used in Hungary came from the Ukraine. Word of what happened trickling back into the Ukraine has caused trouble there.

Teenagers Revolt

The Communists had trained Hungarian boys and girls how to fight tanks with Molotov cocktails. When Russian tanks entered Budapest, this knowledge was turned against the Russian teachers. These are some of the youngsters now being deported in long, sealed trains of boxcars. Despite their Soviet training, these youth organizations turned out to be the strongest freedom fighters.

The Hungarians actually received most of their tanks and guns, from the Soviet Army. During the early stages of the fighting in Budapest, seven Russian colonels, among them three commanders of tank units, as well as hundreds of other lesser officers went over to the freedom fighters.

Had they seen the slightest chance of help from the West, a good part of the Soviet Army might have deserted their Kremlin masters. For not only are the Bulgarian, Czechoslovak, East German, Polish, Rumanian components of the Red Army now held unreliable, but some of the fiercest enemies of the Kremlin are reported inside the Russian Army itself.

That is why the MVD secret police components of the Red Army are more alert than ever—namely, to keep the regular army under control.

This basic weakness of the Russian military is not new. It was graphically revealed when United States Army officers interrogated Russian prisoners after the war and found that the amazing total of 3.6 million had surrendered to Hitler, most of them hoping to overthrow the regime in Moscow.

This, not the might of the German Army, was the real reason for the lightning Nazi advance over Russia.

Prisoner interrogation reports buried in United States Army files show case after case of Russian officers who surrendered to the Germans, hoping for a change of government in Moscow.

There seems definite evidence that the same Red Army resentment against their Communist masters in the Kremlin exists today.

That is why some advisers in the Eisenhower Administration disagree with the panic policies of the State Department. It is also why a great potential turning-point in his

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